

Flores de Nácar

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Flores de Nácar

by [Angelic_Disaster](#)

Summary

Two serial killers need to work on their communication skills because neither of them is aware that the other is a serial killer.

Very important note: Will has flowers tangled in his hair.

Written for the #HannibalAUgust of 2021.

Day 12: Flower shop 🌸

Notes

Translation to **Russian** | **Русский** available: [Цветы из перламутра](#) by [Xanya Boo](#) and [Superbee](#)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

It had been... unexpected. Contrary to Hannibal's usual kills, and it all had to do with a pigeon.

Truly and in all honesty, Hannibal had a lot more self control than that... But the man had been rude. Hannibal knew that he should have asked for his card and wait. But he just couldn't. His coffee machine broke that morning, the battery of his car died unexpectedly, he ended up being twenty minutes late to the first session of his day, and this man had been *so rude*.

Oh, and a pigeon took a shit on Hannibal's new navy blue suit. Fantastic.

It had been truly a *very* bad morning.

And it was going to get *worse*.

Hannibal, of course, wasn't going to display the man as a part of the Chesapeake Ripper's sounders. He was in no mood to start another one. But that didn't mean Hannibal wasn't going to put some effort on its display.

You know, to relieve some stress.

That's why he was now entering the, rather rustic, flower shop and being assaulted by a horde of happy wagging tails.

"They're well behaved," the man behind the counter groaned with not a better humor than Hannibal, surely recognizing the sour look on Hannibal's face at having his clothes showered with dog hair. "They won't bite."

And Hannibal also ended up there because his favorite flower shop was closed, the owner taking a week off for family related issues.

Definitely not Hannibal's best day.

"What can I do for you?" The man, who's name tag read only *Will*, asked without even having the common decency to glance at him.

In answer, Hannibal forced the most charming smile he could after such a tremendous shitty day. Meaning, the fakest one.

"Hello, Will," Hannibal said and Will, utterly confused, lifted his face so fast it made his neck crack. Hannibal winced at the sound. For a second in which Will remembered he had a name tag in his clothes and Hannibal recovered from the sound of Will's bones, they shared a look in which Hannibal met the most gorgeous eyes known to man behind the most beautiful but unbrushed curls. Then, Will tilted his head to one side, cracking the bones again, then to the other cracking the remaining ones. Hannibal was truly unamused and just wanted this horrible day to end.

"I need a bouquet." Hannibal said when Will finished making ungodly noises with his neck. "Are you familiar with flowers' language?"

"Yeah, sure," the man said without true confidence behind his words. Hannibal wanted to tear his own eyelashes one by one.

"Good. I need a bouquet for a funeral, preferably one that symbolizes my disgust about the dead."

"Of course," Will said, taking a notebook completely unperturbed and not judging Hannibal's words at all. One good thing, finally. "What's your budget and when do you need it?"

"A simple bouquet will do well, there is no problem about money. If it's not a bother, I can wait in the coffee shop across the street until you finish, I want it today."

"Okay— No. Stop." Will said, holding one of his hands up while with the other pinched the bridge of his nose. "Give me an estimate of how much money you would like to spend, I won't make you a bouquet without that at the very least, and saying *simple* doesn't narrow it in the slightest," then, he unapologetically looked Hannibal up and down, sending his point straight. " '*Simple*' varies from person to person."

"Very well," Hannibal sighed, he could feel a headache forming and the only thing he wanted was to come home and cut the liver from the man hidden in the back of his car. "Three hundred dollars. No more than five kinds of flowers. Have I narrowed it enough?"

"I can work with that," Will answered, scribbling something unreadable in his notebook with calligraphy that looked more like it was written by a chicken with Parkinson than a human hand. "Are you in some kind of rush for the bouquet?"

"I would very much have it—"

"That means no." Will interrupted him. "If you could give me a number and a name it would be great. I'll have it done for today. Come pick it up after five."

"Can't you—?" and again, Will interrupted him.

"No. I'm working and you're not my only customer." Will said, even as the flower shop was completely empty and under the notebook there was a crossword Will had been doing before Hannibal entered. "We close at seven. You can come between five and seven."

Hannibal breathed in and out one time to calm his nerves. He had a scalpel under his sleeve, but there were too many dogs. He breathed one time for every dog. (He had counted seven. Who, in his right mind, would have seven dogs?) Then he took his wallet out.

"Very well," he said, placing one hundred dollars on the table and his card. "Do you have a business card?"

Will send him the coldest, less amused stare Hannibal had ever seen and, looking Hannibal directly in the eyes, he said with the most unapologetically assholness:

"No."

Dr. Hannibal Lecter. Psychiatrist.

"Great, fucking great," Will told the dogs once one *Dr. Hannibal Lecter* was out of his shop. "Are you ready to start working in this snobby asshole's bouquet buddy?"

Winston just barked in answer, way more excited than Will felt.

[x]

Hannibal came back by the flower shop at exactly 5:17 P.M. and his mood was in no better state.

While Will worked on his crossword and Hannibal's bouquet, Hannibal decided to get a coffee in the coffee shop across the street, even if he had to go to his house later and *wait* for three hours until Will finished. Sadly, he ended with his pants completely ruined after he threw coffee on them. And after the coffee and the bird, this suit was unsalvageable. He also ended with a slight burn between his thighs. Marvelous.

He entered the flower shop hoping that he could ask for Will's contact (supposedly in case of future flower related emergencies) and come back to kill him later. Will seemed to be in good shape, and Hannibal didn't smell alcohol or smoke on him. Maybe he could get a few good cuts from him, and he would make a beautiful tableaux without a doubt.

What Hannibal didn't expect was to find the most gorgeous bouquet he had seen in his life.

And *that* was a huge compliment, since one time he had filled every orifice of a woman's face with flowers.

(It counted as a bouquet if you asked him)

But *this*. This was... beautiful didn't begin to cover it.

"This... is this *my* bouquet?" Hannibal asked. He wasn't completely lost for words, but it was as close as someone had made him in years.

"Yep. At first I used the cheapest flowers I could find, since you didn't seem to care about the person you're giving them to; and that would be what I would have done. But it didn't seem right," Will said behind his glasses, biting his tongue, the tip of it out of his mouth, pink and

shiny, lying over his lip in concentration while he was still looking at the bouquet resting on a base in front of him. "You don't care about the person, but that doesn't mean you don't care about the aesthetics of what you're using and how you want to show yourself," Will explained more to himself than to Hannibal, still moving some of the flowers, then he sighed.

"At first you told me that you had no problem with the price, and I may have gone over the three hundred top, but that's on me so don't worry about it," Will continued, finally happy with the bouquet after arranging one last flower, and running a hand through his hair. Hannibal followed the fingers disappear between the dark curls, and found no words to answer with. That's why he didn't tell Will he had flower petals in his hair, not because those made his grumpy face look softer nor because the white petals complimented the lovely pink adorning his cheeks. "You left me one hundred dollars before, so your total will be two hundred more."

Hannibal moved almost in automatic, giving Will the cash, his eyes fixated on the bouquet. The careful position of the flowers, the delicate composition of the colors. It was made with the most tender care, truly fond for the craft.

"You okay there, Dr. Lecter?" Will asked with a mix between amusement, humor and truthful worry in his voice.

It was then, when Hannibal finally lifted his eyes from the flowers and looked directly into Will's eyes, that Hannibal's stomach did an Olympic jump inside him. Hannibal was mesmerized by the beauty of the bouquet, but *those eyes*. Those were otherworldly, stunning blue burying his gaze directly into Hannibal's skull. Those eyes and that face, shouldn't even be compared with anything on Earth.

"It's beautiful," Hannibal said, holding the bouquet close to his chest like the most delicate, precious piece of porcelain. "Thank you."

Will grinned, twisting his lips between pride and true gratefulness.

"My pleasure."

[x]

How Hannibal managed to get home, he couldn't exactly say. It has been so long since the last time he was so truly shaken out of his edge. And all from flowers, bright eyes and a pretty face.

Hannibal looked at the bouquet on the vase of his kitchen filled with water. He should be getting started to display the body hidden in his pantry. He should be getting started, but he

just *couldn't* bring himself to destroy the bouquet.

Because *destroy* was the perfect word for it. Because to move only one flower from its place should be considered a crime.

Hannibal sighed. It seemed that the display would have to wait another day.

He looked at the pantry door. He hadn't taken anything from the body, but he supposed a dead man wouldn't miss an arm.

(and just because Hannibal wasn't completely against committing crimes, he took one flower from the bouquet and pressed it between the pages of a book)

(if the book ended being *The Iliad* or not, it's up to the reader)

[x]

Will's dogs seemed to love sausages made from human flesh. Hannibal hoped that if Will's dogs liked him, it could put him in Will's good book since it seemed that Hannibal didn't want to kill the rude man anymore. The perks of being pretty and making pretty bouquets.

"My dogs are on a strict diet," Will said with such a quiet anger in his voice that made Hannibal wince. "*Don't* feed them again."

"My apologies," Hannibal said, pocketing back the rest of sausages ignoring the sad whine of the dogs.

"Something happened?" Will asked, dressed with a dirty, plastic apron, watering the plants closest to the window.

"Hello Will," Hannibal smiled, and this time it was natural. The joy pulled at the corners of his mouth with such ease Hannibal barely recognized himself in the action. It was almost unperceivable, the slightest twitch upward of his lips, but a smile nonetheless. "I was hoping I could commission another bouquet, preferably for today."

It was the very first expression that wasn't bordering on annoyance or confusion that Hannibal saw Will made. Honest surprise.

"Another? So soon?"

"Yes," Hannibal said, leaning close where Will was standing, admiring the recently watered plants, so vividly green. "The last one was gorgeous, and I find myself wanting one for my home. And I insist on paying the full price this time."

One of the dogs nosed at Will's hands, demanding to be pet, and while he obliged, Will sent Hannibal a wary look before placing the watering pot on a near table.

Silence stretched for a second in which Will fidgeted with his hands. First, placing them inside his pockets and turning his face away, then growing nervous and looking away to the window, then to the door. Then he laughed, an uncomfortable chuckle as he threaded one of his hands through his hair before he looked back at Hannibal, placing his gaze between Hannibal's shoulder and ear.

"Sure, it's your money I guess," he shrugged. "Do you have something in mind?"

"Yes, in fact: white, pink and light blue flowers," he said with a triumphant smile, soft in the edges.

Will's eyes almost locked with Hannibal's, but in the end they just rested over the doctor's nose.

"I suppose money is not a problem," Will said and Hannibal bowed his head in a gentle nod, making Will huff a weak laugh. "Of course. No specifications for any kind of flowers?"

"I'll leave it to your expertise."

"Sure. I can have it ready for today at six, or tomorrow first thing in the morning."

"I can come back tomorrow then, if that's better for you," Hannibal decided, as much as he wanted the bouquet for today, he thought that visiting Will three days in a row would be even better.

"Yes, that would be great."

"Very well," none of them moved. Will was still looking away, running from Hannibal's eyes. Hannibal, on the other hand, was lost in the man and his beauty, he supposed it was the perfect moment to seize his opportunity. "Would you mind if I asked for your number?"

The expression in Will's eyes made it clear that he wasn't a person that people usually managed to take by surprise. The clear confusion in his face also made clear that Hannibal was managing to accomplish it two times in a row, and it made his chest fill with pride.

"My usual flower shop is closed for the foreseeable future, and I would very much like to have your number in case of any emergency I could stumble upon," Hannibal explained and Will's face contorted first into confusion and then into suspicion.

"Some kind of emergency? What kind of emergency requires flowers?"

Hannibal didn't shrug. Ever. But he lifted one of his shoulders and tilted his head *just so*, making it look like the finest shrug known to a man.

"A flower emergency."

Pause.

Will looked at him with the most blank expression for a moment, and like a sudden lighting, the gods smiled at Hannibal, revealing to him the most beautiful of images: Will laughing.

Will quickly covered his face with his hand, but the image of his smile, honest and bright, was already there, branded in Hannibal's mind. A picture of it hung in every room of his mind palace. The sound of Will's laugh echoing by the hallways like bells.

"Sure. You can—" Will chuckled again, his eyes creasing in the corners, his smile stretching wide in his face, marking his cheeks with deep lines and the most precious tone of pink. Will shook his head, trying to recover his composure. He sighed again, not annoyed as before, but lightly, the line of his shoulders relaxed, making him shrink at least one inch. And then, Will locked eyes with him, with sly, playful malice behind them. "You can call the shop. My personal number is off limits." Another pause in which Hannibal didn't dare to speak, and Will considered. "For now."

Hannibal smiled back, and took it as a win.

In the end, Hannibal ended up destroying half of the last bouquet, but it was for a good reason.

A new tableaux would be discovered by the FBI between two and four days. Probably, Hannibal supposed, maybe a couple of days more. The FBI had been very incompetent lately.

The other half of the bouquet stayed at his dinner table. As it should.

[x]

The bell from the front door of the shop sang in the morning as Hannibal entered; dogs piled around him, nosing and pawing, searching for more treats of sausages, and whining in disappointment where such a thing didn't magically appear from the-not-so-stranger's pockets. The sunlight filtered through the tall windows, rays of light bathed the shop, the pollen and dust danced in the air, and in the back, there was Will, frowning at a bouquet as if it was the sole culprit of every horrible thing that had happened to him since birth.

Will didn't raise his head or his eyes when Hannibal stepped closer. He just squirmed in his seat, head down, and made a vague gesture to the bouquet at his side in the counter.

To call it beautiful would never do the bouquet justice, as to call Will just *beautiful* would never do him justice either.

"Thank you, Will," that was all Hannibal could muster. His voice was barely a whisper, soft and light and completely enamored.

"I took some liberties," Will answered in a whisper as soft as Hannibal's, but not as enamored. Just plain embarrassed and nervous.

White, silken flowers were the canvas where Will worked, like a sculptor with marble. Thousands of Porcelain Flowers, white and pink blooming in the same lovely tone of Will's flushed skin; Sweet Williams scattered red spots across the bouquet, highlighted within the white and the pink, in the same way red spots appeared on Will's cheeks, fierce but adorable when he blushed for too long. Like now.

Two bunches of pale blue, Delphinium Blue Lace flowers, were left like the sole center of the bouquet; a circle of white in the center of the petals, and a soft brown core the size of a bee. And around it, the bouquet framed with dark brown paper.

It was difficult for Hannibal to tear his eyes from the flowers and look at the inspiration of it. Darling, lovely thing that Will was, reading him so easily so soon and yet, blushing like a cherry blossom in spring at only the attempt of being appreciated.

"Ah, it seems that you've read my intentions more clearly than I expected," Hannibal muttered with coyness, not entirely sure himself if it was real or faked.

And Hannibal ended up looking at Will in the end, because as much as the bouquet was precious, why would he look at it when it paled in comparison to the original inspiration?

"I guess so?" Will didn't even try to pretend he looked at his face this time. He just left his eyes to wander under Hannibal's throat, examining the doctor's tie—

"Marry me," Hannibal said.

— and Will's head made that same awful noise of bones cracking like the first time, when he raised it suddenly, locking eyes with Hannibal.

(Hannibal made a mental note to offer him a massage later)

They looked at each other in silence, except for the noise of the street and the pawing of the dogs and occasional soft bark around the shop. Will had to blink a couple of times before speaking.

"What?"

And yet, nothing clever came from his lips.

"Marry me," Hannibal repeated, and Will was as lost as the first time he heard it.

"I'm pretty sure there should be a couple of steps before that," Will chuckled, between nervous and confused but blushing a darker shade of pink, borderline with red. "I think a date would be more appropriate?"

"Will," Hannibal said, in his more serious tone, one that he would use to discuss matters of life and death, as he took Will's hands in his, over the counter. "May I take you on a date?"

Silence between questions until Will's brain rebooted seemed to be their dynamic from now on, or so Will thought when he recovered and laughed but made no attempt to take his hands away from Hannibal's.

"I just walked straight into that one, haven't I?" Hannibal didn't shrug, because Hannibal Lecter did not do such things. But he lifted his shoulders and if you asked Will, he would have said that Hannibal did, in fact, shrug.

"As much as I would *love* to," Will exaggerated the word behind a devilish smile. "I have rules, and my first rule is: I don't date psychiatrists."

"I was a surgeon before I became a psychiatrist," Hannibal answered and his soft expression of defiance and adoration didn't falter in the slightest. "I also consider myself a skilled chef, if that gives me half an opportunity."

Will shook his head, muffling a chuckle again. When was the last time he laughed this much?

"Second rule: I don't go to a stranger's house on the first date."

"A very intelligent rule. Self preservation skills are important." Hannibal conceded. "May I suggest a coffee shop? It's public, and there are plenty of people to recognize me in case I end up being a serial killer," Hannibal smiled as if he had tell a joke only he could understand, then continued. "There is no alcohol involved and I would be out of your hair before nightfall."

Will did his best to cover the smile that pulled at the corners of his mouth, curling a brow. But he couldn't hide the humor in his voice, "I haven't agreed yet."

"Neither have you declined. That means I still have an opportunity to get you to accept," Hannibal beamed, and Will threw his head back with a new laugh.

"You don't even know my last name."

"We could share mine, if you want."

The fucking audacity. Will opened his mouth, but he was utterly speechless. He tried to speak two times before he shook his head in what seemed to be the fifth time in the day.

"Okay, I'll give that one to you. That was smooth. Cheesy, but smooth."

"Is that a yes?"

"You're insane. And ridiculous." Will said, biting back the smile and running one of his hands free from Hannibal's grip just to thread it through his hair; he tapped at the desk then, considering...

"Friday," Will ended saying, "there's a place near that I like. Come pick me up here after three?"

Hannibal was beaming with joy, and Will wondered if he could get blinded by it and where the fuck he had left his sunglasses.

"But another thing, my third rule," Will pointed a playful but threatening finger into Hannibal's direction. "Don't psychoanalyze me."

Hannibal nodded with more grace than Will had in his entire body.

"I will do my best."

"And fourth rule: If you dare to be so cliché as to bring me flowers, I'll kick you out of the shop."

"Would you be so kind as to inform me what I can bribe the dogs with to gain their blessings?"

"I only feed them with handmade treats. My own recipe."

"Maybe you could send me the recipe," Hannibal tried again, growing more playful and bold with every new interaction. "You have my card, and my number."

"Don't push your luck, Dr. Lecter," Will advised, pushing the bouquet in Hannibal's direction, finishing the conversation.

"Please, call me Hannibal."

Will hummed, searching for something in Hannibal's face. "I'll take it into consideration," he said, leaving a playful silence after it, enjoying how Hannibal's name hung in it; and how Hannibal's eyes darkened with hunger.

"I'll see you on Friday, then?" Hannibal asked, not defeated in the slightest but visibly breathless, holding the bouquet and delaying his exit.

"If you don't have any *flower emergencies* until then. Yes." Will answered with cheeky mischievousness in his voice, ushering him away to the door. "Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Will."

"What do you say buddy, do you like the sound of *Will Lecter*?" Winston growled as if he could understand, and Will laughed. "Yeah, same."

Hannibal. Will weighed the sound of it in his tongue the rest of the day. *Hannibal*. Dark, thick like caramel yet it felt like silk. *Hannibal Lecter*.

He smiled. Well, let's see.

[x]

Hannibal obeyed the fourth rule. More or less.

"You're ridiculous," Will laughed, regarding the blue delphinium flower from the last bouquet resting in Hannibal's breast pocket. He seemed to have chosen the suit just to combine it with the flower, the palette of colors, the tie, the shirt. Will gave him points for trying, and for being able to dress with something so ridiculous and still make it look elegant. He also took points away from him for being so utterly ridiculous.

"Let's go."

To Will's dismay the date was... good. Really good. Hannibal was witty, and made him laugh; intelligent and the conversation ran smoother than he thought it would be. And the coffee was good, and for a moment Will found himself troubled, wanting to break his second rule.

He had broken the first after all, and he had left a sign in the shop's door that read *'Be back in an hour'*. And as far as that wasn't exactly a rule, Will still had broken it, staying with Hannibal in the coffee shop for two more hours than expected.

"Why exactly do you want to date me?" Will asked near the end of the date. Somewhere in the middle of it, he had stopped toying at the brim of the empty mug with his fingers and ended holding hands over the table with a fucking psychiatrist.

"Because I've never seen a more beautiful man in my life," Hannibal answered without the slightest shame.

"That's all, Dr. Lecter? My looks?" Will curled an amused brow. "I would never have considered you so shallow."

"My first intention may have been hollow," Hannibal said with such feign coyness it bordered on ridiculous, and ended up making Will snort. "But believe me Will, I wouldn't take you on another date if you were only pretty, and not immensely interesting."

“My, my, Dr. Lecter,” Will said, leaning over the table, to whisper in confidence. Flirting was always easy due to his empathy, but never had been so *natural*, and more importantly, so *fun*. “Are you saying you would take me on another date?”

Hannibal mirrored him, leaning over the table too with a fox-like smile, the sharp tooth visible over the doctor’s plush lips that Will had been fantasizing about sucking until they were swollen for the last half hour.

“I wouldn’t be adverse.”

Will was grateful that he didn’t have any rule against kissing on the first date.

Will also found himself thinking that *maybe* this could work.

[x]

Dating Hannibal Lecter was ridiculous. And Will adored it.

Hannibal, always the gentleman, didn't push him. He was content to just spend time with Will. And the dogs.

After the fifth date Will agreed to send him the recipe for dogs' treats, and now he feared the dogs had a new favorite human, or would eat him alive if he ever decided to break up with Hannibal.

It ended well for the dogs. Hannibal's treats looked better than the food Will cooked for himself after all. He couldn't blame the dogs for growing attached. He was getting there too.

And it also ended with Will finally giving his number to Hannibal, and both of them messaging and calling each other all day like teenagers with free minutes after school.

When they stopped dating, Will thought, the thing he would miss the most was going to be Hannibal's whiskey collection. Really, why and how could he have such good bottles and never drink whiskey?

Second, he would miss Hannibal's food. God. It was decadent. If Will had known he would have accepted Hannibal's dinner invitation for the first date instead of waiting till the eight.

He would miss a lot of things. Like the way Hannibal looked at him as if Will had created the universe itself; how Hannibal threaded his fingers in his hair to pick up the flower petals tangled in his curls. How Hannibal buried his fingers in his hair, fingernails scraping at his scalp when they kissed.

Fuck. The kisses. He would miss the kisses and how those always left him floating and aching. How Hannibal's lips curled in a bright, stupid smile every time they broke apart. He would miss that gorgeous cupid bow of his upper lip. He would miss Hannibal's hand holding his cheeks while they kissed, warm and delicate, his thumb stroking Will's skin gently; like if Will was the most precious thing Hannibal ever held.

He would miss Hannibal's smile, his laugh, his crooked tooth biting at his throat and melting his spine; Hannibal's kisses behind his ears, Hannibal's soft voice whispering sweet nonsense and his eyelashes tickling the skin of his throat, making him ache inside; making Will want more.

But Will never asked for more. He couldn't. He could date Hannibal. He could kiss him and dine at his house and sleep in his bed. Alone. Because, always the gentleman, Hannibal never pushed him for more, always left Will to sleep in his bed and retired to the guest room. And Will could sleep in Hannibal's bed, wearing Hannibal's clothes, hugging Hannibal's pillow. But he couldn't do more.

Younger Will had always considered himself straight. Until his first day of college, when he saw the phantom hand of the love of his life. The artistic brush of death, the elegance between the grotesque. After his first glance at The Chesapeake Ripper, he knew he didn't care about gender; he couldn't care about anything except for The Chesapeake Ripper. He couldn't love anybody else.

That's why he would miss Hannibal, and dating Hannibal and kissing Hannibal. But extending their time together felt, as every other relationship he'd ever had, like cheating.

"Is everybody ready for their weekly w-a-l-k?" Hannibal asked, spelling out the word to not over-excite the already very excited dogs.

Will bit his lips, watching from the counter as Hannibal petted every dog, greeting them by name before walking to the counter and greeting Will with a kiss that was more smile than a proper kiss.

Will knew for sure that he would miss how Hannibal's nose wrinkled every time he got inside Will's car, filled with dog hair and smelling exactly like a car filled with dog hair and seven dogs would smell like. He would also miss walking hand in hand with Hannibal in the park and seven dogs lashed to his waist.

Will ached every time he thought about it.

"You have something in your hair," Hannibal said, pulling an entire flower from between Will's curls.

"I have no idea how that got there," Will laughed. But he did know. Since one time Hannibal picked a flower from Will's hair in the same situation – meaning sitting on a bench in the park, watching the dogs run – and placing it in his breast pocket, Will had developed a habit of placing one behind his ear and *forgetting* about it every time Hannibal was coming to visit.

Will knew he should break up with Hannibal. He knew he never should have started dating Hannibal.

But it was nice to be loved.

And Will wanted to love Hannibal too.

Hannibal nodded, as if believing Will's weak little lie, and placed the flower inside the breast pocket of his suit as he always did. The blue and yellow flower did not work at all with Hannibal's suit, but he didn't seem to mind. He just held Will's hand in his with a smile.

Will smiled back, tearing his eyes away and lacing their fingers together. Maybe another month wouldn't do any harm. After all, he would miss Hannibal. A lot. He should seize every second together.

But there was also another thing.

Hannibal was handsome, and kind, and intelligent and so much more, and Will adored him with all his soul—

"Can I help you?" Tobias Budge asked, unaware of the danger.

"I have a piano in my home that hasn't been tuned for decades," Will told him. "Do you think you could give it a look?"

The Maestro wasn't truly a style Will liked to observe, and much less to replicate. But he was easy to find and easier to kill. And Will's jealousy weighed more than the aesthetic. He wouldn't let anyone send presents to The Chesapeake Ripper.

He hoped this time Freddie Lounds, or at least anyone in the FBI realized it was The Copycat and not The Maestro behind the display. Not like last time.

Really, was he the only good profiler that the FBI had?

He also hoped the Chesapeake Ripper liked this tableaux.

—and because he adored Hannibal, Will knew Hannibal deserved better than to unawaresly date a serial killer with such a big, stupid crush on another.

[x]

Inspiration had stricken Hannibal again. After so much time it was back, and all thanks to Will.

That meant two things.

First, that he was planning a dinner party.

Second, that the Chesapeake Ripper was on a sounder.

Hannibal wondered what the FBI thought about the new Ripper's tableaux. When before it was only his own hand, now Hannibal relied on Will. Even if Will wasn't aware of his participation.

(It was a blessing in itself that Will didn't read *TattleCrime*, and was really explicit on how much he hated it)

With every new kill, Hannibal asked Will for a new bouquet, and Will would deliver the most beautiful arrangement, succeeding the previous one. Then, Hannibal would work the tableaux around it.

The first kill wore Will's third bouquet. Jasmine, lavender and black branches.

(The white, pink, red and blue one rested at Hannibal's bedside table for a couple of days. And later, one of each flower found their way to be pressed and dried between the pages of a book, just to be later framed together and lay on top of Hannibal's bedside table)

The second wore a bouquet made mostly of greens and yellows, after Hannibal asked Will for a bouquet made of *'your favorite flowers'*.

Since the Ripper's tableaux always had hidden meanings behind every piece, Hannibal could only imagine how confused the FBI should be now, trying to decipher what he was trying to say.

The third kill was waiting, and before Hannibal started with that one, he needed to ask an important question first.

Maybe one day he could make a more active participant of Will.

But for now.

"Do you think you would be able to prepare me another bouquet for next week?" Hannibal asked, looking as besotted as ever as he watched Will watering the plants.

"Of course. Anything in particular, babe?"

"I'm sure you'll come up with something magnificent as you do every time."

"Sure," Will rolled his eyes, as if he wasn't expecting the answer already. He left the watering pot away and turned to the doctor. "Do you have something planned for tonight?"

Hannibal frowned. There was a downfall in being a serial killer, and it was how much time it consumed him. Time he could be spending with Will, cuddling together in his living room in front of the fire, drinks forgotten somewhere between heated kisses and wandering hands instead of stalking his prey.

"I'm afraid I have something to do tonight, my week is rather busy," he sighed.

"Preparing a dinner party is really time-consuming, isn't it?" Will joked. He leaned over where Hannibal was sitting (a plastic chair that had never been there, and Will had bought at Walmart seven weeks ago with Hannibal on his mind) to leave a kiss in the crown of his head before he continued walking towards the counter.

"Yes, in fact it is. Especially now that the date is coming closer," Hannibal said, watching Will for a moment before standing and following him.

"I was wondering, Will..." he began, with uncommon hesitation in his voice and the slightest fidgeting of his hands. "I understand your aversion to crowds, and rest assured that I would never had asked this—"

"You're stuttering Hannibal," Will interrupted. He had already realized he was the only person alive who could do something like that and get away with it. His power over Hannibal was as amusing as it was endearing. And he loved exploding it. "Go straight to the point."

Hannibal sighed. He always wore a carefully stitched expression, one that Will enjoyed to poke at, especially when it made Hannibal's brow twitch.

"Would you come to my dinner party?" Hannibal asked, soft and scared and *so hopeful*. Will was glad he didn't have anything in his hand because he was sure he would have dropped it on the floor.

This was *bad*.

"You don't have to make conversation," Hannibal continued, taking another step towards him. Another person would never have realized anything amiss in his tone. They wouldn't hear the fear. But Will could. This was bad. Utterly bad. Horrible. He should have broken up with Hannibal before. He had messed up in his egoism.

Will didn't want to turn back and see him. He knew Hannibal enough to recognize the desperate edge in his words.

"We don't need to tell anybody about our relationship if you don't wish to. But I would deeply treasure your presence there," Hannibal continued, walking closer to him, and Will knew that the moment he turned around Hannibal would be watching him with those dark, beautiful

eyes, begging him. He knew the moment he turned around he was going to break Hannibal's heart.

"Will?"

"I'm sorry—" Will's voice broke, and Hannibal's arms were instantly around him, keeping him whole.

"*Shh* darling boy, it's alright," Hannibal whispered on the skin of Will's throat, leaving soft, calming kisses across it; keeping Will in place between strong arms. "It was my fault, I shouldn't have pushed you into it, you already had made your opinion clear about the party. You don't have to come if you don't wish to, Will," Hannibal continued, stroking gently with his palms at Will's shaking body.

"I'm sorry," Will insisted, turning slowly towards Hannibal. It was so unfair that Hannibal was being so sweet with him, apologizing and taking care of Will when it was *his* fault.

"Will, you don't have to apologize, I—"

"Hannibal." Will placed both of his hands on Hannibal's chest, shutting the older man immediately. Will didn't want to move his head, watch the exact moment when he dropped Hannibal's heart on the floor. "I'm sorry."

But Will couldn't do Hannibal the disrespect of being such a coward.

"Hannibal, I can't— I can't give you what you want."

"I want you, Will. Nothing less, nothing more. In any way you wish," there was a soft gleam in his eyes that told Will about the machinery in Hannibal's brain trying to decipher this outburst. "I don't need you to come to my dinner party. If I knew it would bring you so much distress I would have never asked."

"It's not about the dinner party!" Will groaned, bumping his forehead against Hannibal's chest, and receiving a strong hand resting at the nape of his neck and the feeling of Hannibal's arm snaking around his waist. He didn't want Hannibal to break apart. Preferably ever.

"Then you must explain yourself Will, because I'm afraid I don't follow."

Will took a deep breath, smelling the fragrance of Hannibal's cologne. Musky and spicy. He didn't know if Hannibal would allow him this closeness after this moment; the strong arms and prideful chest, Hannibal's chin resting on top of his head, gentle fingers caressing his side. God, Will was already missing him *so much*.

"You love me," Will spoke to Hannibal's chest; a soft, broken sound, and he felt Hannibal's fingers curl where they were buried in his hair. Hannibal didn't doubt, there was no hesitation about his feelings; but saying it out loud was to play with the edge of a sharp knife.

"Yes." Hannibal's hesitation didn't come from himself, but from Will's silent answer. "But you don't love me."

Will could feel it, the sharp pieces of porcelain under the sole of his shoes; hear the sound of it shattering against the floor.

"I wish I could."

Will lifted his head, and it *hurt*. Hannibal was *destroyed*. His dark eyes and whole demeanor shutted down; as if Will's words have turned up a switch and raised all of his barriers. His breath was just a tad too even, his expression under perfect control.

Yet still, Hannibal took the bow on the chin with more grace than Will would ever dream to have himself.

"I see," Hannibal said after what felt like years, and Will could feel his own heart miss a beat, fearing Hannibal's reaction.

But Hannibal just sighed again, his shoulders sinking, and the heavy weight of his eyes rested over Will's like a blanket. Hurt, and away, but not entirely gone.

"And what do you wish to do then?" He asked and Will let out a pitiful sound that tried to be a chuckle and ended sounding more like a whimper. Will couldn't entirely relax, but Hannibal was still hugging him, and that was enough for his heart to settle.

"Honestly?" Will laughed, repeating the same miserable sound from before. He held Hannibal's cheeks as tenderly as he could, stroking the sharp cheekbones with his thumbs. "I want to be egoist and keep you with me anyway."

Hannibal didn't smile, but his eyes softened, glistening with pride and fondness; he flexed his fingers and dragged Will closer into a tentative kiss, soft and gentle and so sweet that warmed Will's heart as much as it made him ache.

"But what do *you* want to do?" Will asked, the question forming itself over Hannibal's sad smile.

"I must ask," Hannibal whispered, and the fine tremor of his fingers at Will's waist burned. "Is there a shadow looming over me?"

Will took a moment to breathe, no matter what he chose, deception or honesty, it would be cruel.

"Yes."

Hannibal nodded, and just like that, the barriers were up again, all doors to his mind closed with lost keys, the perfect person-suit stitched perfectly. Will wanted to tear it to shreds.

"I think I would like to leave now."

"Hannibal—" Will tried to speak without truly knowing what he was going to say and the awful ringtone of his phone interrupted the moment. "Fuck!"

Will almost dropped it, taking it from his pocket to hang up the call. There were three seconds of peace in which Will tried to apologize before the blasting sound of the predetermined ringtone started again.

"You should answer, it seems important." Hannibal said with the most dry tone Will heard from him.

"It's not." Will insisted, and for emphasis he tried to turn it off when it started to ring again. Hannibal sighed and took Will's hand until the damned, horrible ringtone stopped.

"I'll see you tomorrow, same hour as ever Tuesday," he said, and Will never hated someone more than he hated himself right now. "I just want to think."

"Of course."

Will didn't move, nor did he try to do anything to keep Hannibal with him, nor did he move his head when Hannibal gently kissed him on the cheek. He just let the soft, warm lips rest there for a second too long before Hannibal walked away.

The bell of the door marked Hannibal's definitive leave, and his fucking phone started ringing again.

Amazing timing.

"I told you not to call me ever again, Jack." Will grunted as a form of greeting. "Do you need me to repeat myself? I quit."

A beat.

It's the Ripper.

Another.

"Well, shit," great, amazing timing. Will cursed inside, looking at the spot where Hannibal had stood and sighed. In the end, it was for the best. "Alright, send me the pictures."

The first one is tentative, we don't know for sure if he's The Ripper. Jack had said. The second and the third, we are not sure. The M.O. is the same, but there is something weird.

Well, Will didn't know if he would call it *weird*, but it truly was *something*.

He zoomed in on the photos Jack sent him to the phone. The first kill *could be* The Ripper. It lacked his theatrics, but the elegance and artistry were there.

The second and the third, those were definitely him.

We don't understand the message he is trying to send. The flowers don't make any sense.

Will laughed, sitting down on the floor with the dogs laying around him. Of course they wouldn't make sense. Because they were not made to make sense.

His first bouquet and a man without an arm.

Jasmine, lavender and black branches filling the chest of a man without heart and lungs.

Will remembered the dinner at Hannibal's house. The first time in his life that he ate heart, the decadent flavor and how the flesh melted in his tongue. And breakfast in bed the next morning; scramble eggs and a kind of meat that Will didn't care enough to ask where it came from.

The third body kneeling at the altar of a church, leaving the offer of Will's favorite flowers to an unknown god.

Will laughed. They would need to start working on their communication skills from now on.

Another message entered his inbox under Jack's number: *What do you think Will?*

"That I have a long night ahead," Will said to the empty shop. "And a bouquet to prepare."

[x]

It was going to be too funny to just be there and watch the world burn when Hannibal entered the shop and the first thing Jack did was shout "GET THE FUCK OUT!"

But knowing what he knew, and since Hannibal had to blink not two, not three but *four* times and his brows ricocheted up so high he couldn't differentiate between them and his hairline, Will had to intervene.

"It's alright Jack, he can stay, Hannibal is my boyfriend," he said and two pairs of shocked eyes suddenly were on him. Hannibal, Will supposed, was shocked at being called *boyfriend* for the first time, and Jack... Well, he surely was surprised that Will had a boyfriend. Not exactly because he never had exactly come out of a closet (if there had been one to begin with) but because how the fuck Will Graham tolerated constant human interaction?

"Jack, this is Hannibal, Hannibal, this is Jack Crawford." Will gestured between them, and just to be sure, he added on a final note in case Hannibal had any knife under his sleeve. "*My boss.*"

“Hello,” Hannibal said after a moment, probably used to compartmentalize this new information, before walking towards the counter where Will and Jack were looking at crime scene pictures. He still was very confused though. “Boss?”

“Ex-boss,” Will added, and Jack groaned.

“Still, I would be grateful, Mr. Lecter, if you could leave for the moment. We are in the middle of something here.”

“*Dr.* Lecter, Jack, please,” Will interrupted with a smile that beamed pride. “Hannibal here is a psychiatrist – yes, you heard right, psychiatrist, please don’t comment on it – and I would love to hear his opinion on this matter.”

“And what exactly is this matter...?” Hannibal leaned closer to the counter, and stopped in his tracks, cold as ice, when he saw the pictures. Will smiled.

“I didn’t tell you what I did for work before I opened the shop, didn’t I, *babe?*” Will asked, stretching his throat and batting his eyelashes in the way he knew made Hannibal weak.

“No–,” And of course it worked, Will could see the exact moment in which Hannibal almost choked on his own breath. “No, you haven’t.”

“Profiler” Will smiled, tilting his head, “and FBI agent.”

“The very best. Special Agent Will Graham,” Jack added, inserting himself back in the conversation and Hannibal visibly shuddered at hearing the name. It seemed that Hannibal had done his research in TattleCrime, but had never seen the pictures of the famous profiler. And Will of course, had never told his last name to any potential lover, in case they decided to google him. “An expert in The Chesapeake Ripper.”

“Flattery won’t make me come back to the field, Jack.” The moment stretched, and Will enjoyed every second of it; the myriad of emotions and shock in Hannibal’s face. “Now Hannibal, do you think you could give us a hand with The Chesapeake Ripper?” He said *too* sweetly, gesturing to the pictures over the countertop. Hannibal tensed.

“I’m afraid that, as far as I read TattleCrime, I’m not an expert in serial killers, and I don’t think I could give insight that the expert in the Chesapeake Ripper couldn’t give.”

“Oh don’t worry love, I think you would do *just* fine,” Will smiled so wickedly, locking his eyes directly with Hannibal’s, and the doctor lost all his air in one trembling breath.

“These two,” Will said, taking the picture of Hannibal’s second and third victim, “I’m sure it’s the Ripper. These two on the other hand...”

“The Ripper kills in sounders of three,” Jack explained, taking the picture corresponding to Hannibal’s first victim. “This one doesn’t seem to be The Ripper, but it’s strange to find a corpse without an arm and decorated with flowers; and two weeks later, The Ripper starts his sounder with similar displays.”

“We can’t be so naive as to think that The Ripper doesn’t hunt outside of his sounders. The Ripper is a creature of art, but he is a hunter too,” Will added, looking directly at Hannibal. “I’m sure it takes him a lot of time to prepare his sounders. If he doesn’t hunt between them, he will *starve*. Don’t you think, Hannibal?”

Will had never felt the adrenaline rush through him with this intensity. Hannibal’s eyes were consumed by his pupils; a pyre of fire burning in the middle of the dark. Hannibal’s careful stitched mask didn’t betray his inner turmoil, but Will didn’t need to see it in his face to know it was there.

“It would be sensible to think so, yes.” Dr. Hannibal Lecter. Always so under control; Will couldn’t wait to watch that control crumble. “But it wouldn’t count as part of his sounder. So the fourth picture?”

“That’s the tricky one,” Will said, taking the last picture before Hannibal could have a look at it. “The Ripper is a patient hunter. He plans his kills and tableaux with the meticulous perfection of a clock.”

“It sounds as if you admire him,” Hannibal said, sending Will a cursory glance, before he looked away.

Will wasn’t sure what Hannibal discovered in his face to run away so fast, he supposed he wasn’t as careful with his person-suit as Hannibal. But he knew what he felt.

Admiration.

“I don’t know if that’s the correct word.”

Hunger.

“And what would be the correct word, Will?” He asked, his voice shaking and his fingers trembling. Will just smiled.

Love.

“As I was saying,” Will continued, ignoring the question. “The Ripper is meticulous and patient. He always waits three weeks between kills. The next one was scheduled for next week.”

“If it’s the Ripper, we lost the opportunity to catch him,” Jack said, and Hannibal suddenly remembered that there was another person in the room with them. “If not, then it’s a copy-cat, and we have another killer in our hands.”

“Not any copy-cat,” Will added after a moment, since Hannibal didn’t seem to be able to speak, or breathe, or tear his eyes away from the picture. “A lot of killers tried to mimic the Ripper’s M.O. and I always see through them. This one is different.”

“*The Copy-cat never copied the Ripper’s M.O.*” Jack continued. “Why would he start now?”

“I think The Copy-cat never mimicked The Ripper’s because he respected him too much to try.”

“So he doesn’t respect The Ripper anymore?” Will opened his mouth to answer Jack, but instead, it was Hannibal the one who spoke.

“In the last Ripper’s kills the flowers didn’t contribute any meaning. They were just aesthetically pleasant,” Will whispered something that sounded like *‘told-you-so’* to Jack. “If this is indeed *The Copy-cat*,” he said, sending a furtive glance towards Will, and the slightest of smiles. “He took the Ripper’s M.O. and elevated it, since the flowers used in this display *do* have meaning. When was this body discovered?”

“This morning, and very fresh,” Jack explained. “The forensic team is still searching for clues. The victim, one Anthony Dimmond, was killed last night, and today around 9 A.M. an anonymous tip was sent to the FBI about a body.”

“Curious,” Will said. “Do you have any idea what the flowers mean?”

“Yes,” Hannibal said, finally putting the picture back on the counter, but reluctant to let it go. A man who looked too much like Will, holding his heart out of his chest open wide, resting on a bed made of white flowers. “The Porcelain Flowers were commonly used to represent marriage, and the gardenias vary in meanings, between purity and love, and secret lovers. And I think I don’t need to explain what a single red rose where the heart should be, means.”

“The rose was white,” Jack sighed. “It was painted red with the blood of the victim.”

“To highlight the purity of the sentiment,” Will said with a snort, gaining a reproachful look from Jack. “The Copy-cat is in love, Jack.”

“Is this a courtship or a wedding invitation?” Hannibal asked as amused as Will, ignoring the angry FBI agent at his side just to look at Will.

“I think we’ll only know when The Ripper answers,” Will said, without tearing his eyes away from Hannibal’s. “Let me keep the pictures Jack, I’ll call you if anything else comes to mind.”

“*Will.*”

“No Jack, I already told you, I quit,” Will hissed. “I’m not going back to the field. I’m doing this only because it’s The Ripper. But I’m not going to The Copy-cat crime scene.”

“Will you come to The Ripper’s crime scene?”

Will paused for a second, as if considering. As if he wasn’t inside bubbling with joy just at the prospect of doing it. He looked at Hannibal then.

“No. And if you aren’t going to buy flowers for Bella, then I’ll have to ask you to leave.”

In any other moment, Will would have jumped directly at the opportunity to go to a Ripper’s crime scene. But Hannibal’s eyes were the most joyful he’d ever seen. He didn’t need the

cold bodies and old crime scenes, the phantom of a touch when he could be there in flesh when The Chesapeake Ripper hunted again.

“Very well. Thank you Will,” Jack said with a stern look. “And thank you to you too, Dr. Lecter.”

“It has been my pleasure.”

The bell echoed in the shop, then the sound of Jack’s car as he left, and even then, neither of them moved.

“Graham, as in the famous expert in The Chesapeake Ripper FBI profiler Will Graham?” Hannibal asked with humor colouring his voice. Will almost weep with joy.

“Did you think I was just only a pretty face, Hannibal?” Will asked with faux offense, surrounding the counter like a snake until he stood in front of Hannibal.

And then, his eyes and whole demeanor softened. Hannibal was there in front of him, and he couldn’t wait another second.

“It was you,” he said, eyes glistening like stars and his voice just above a whisper. “It has always been you.”

“Will,” Hannibal pulled him closer with such gentleness it felt intolerable, as if Will was holy and fearsome; the same gentleness a priest would use to hold the body and blood of his god. Hannibal’s eyes shone, looking at Will as if he was the one who had put the sun in the sky.

“I can’t believe it’s you,” Will whispered with a trembling laugh, closing the space between them in a kiss that was new and beautiful, and exactly the same as every kiss with Hannibal had been. “You’re finally here.”

“I am.”

“God, it’s you,” Will laughed, bright and loud, his smile in full bloom as he kissed Hannibal again, and again and again. “I’m never letting you go, I’ll kill you if you try to leave me.”

Hannibal smiled, sharp and joyful, biting Will’s lip with his gorgeous crooked tooth. “Would you marry me, then?”

“You’re so ridiculous,” Will laughed, pulling Hannibal from the lapels of his suit so fiercely as he was afraid Hannibal could walk away from him, and kissing him again until the suit was wrinkled to no-recover. “Of course I will.”

Hannibal pulled Will closer, holding him by the waist, both of them holding on to the other as if at any moment they could disappear.

“Now, I’m still invited to your dinner party?” Will asked at the very first opportunity he had to breathe before leaving another peck on Hannibal’s lips, “Because I just happen to have a nice heart waiting in the fridge.”

“It would be an honor to have *my husband* hosting with me,” Hannibal whispered, kissing Will’s cheeks, nose, forehead and every inch of face he could reach.

“Ridiculous,” Will laughed, “you’re so insufferably ridiculous.”

“And yet you love me.”

This time, Will didn’t even have to think of the answer.

“Yes, I do.”

End Notes

Thank you for reading. Lots of love, Angel ♡

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